

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Drinking Water Program
Public Notification**

TEMPLATES FOR NON-COMMUNITY SYSTEMS

The pages that follow contain templates for use by non-community systems. They are generally designed for posting, and their instructions to consumers are tailored to systems where consumers will not be able to boil or otherwise treat their water. Along with each template are instructions, including the required method of delivery and instructions for completing individual sections of the notice. These templates have been adapted for Massachusetts' public water systems from the EPA and the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) *Public Notification Handbook*. The EPA/ASDWA *Handbook* provides additional aids to help water systems develop notices for violation situations. An electronic copy of the Public Notification Handbook is available at EPA's web site (www.epa.gov/safewater/pn.html). **Please note that the EPA/ASDWA Handbook templates are non-state specific so Massachusetts's water suppliers are required to use the Massachusetts' version of the templates for compliance purposes.** Electronic copies of the Massachusetts' public notification templates are available on the DEP website <http://www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/dws/publnot.htm>.

Mandatory language on health effects, which must be included exactly as written, is presented in *italics* (310 CMR 22.16(5)(d)).

You must include the following italicized language in all notices, where applicable. If you post the notice, this language would not be appropriate, since the message would be available to anyone who passes it; in such cases you may omit the language from your notice. Use of this language does *not* relieve you of your obligation to take steps reasonably calculated to notify persons served (310 CMR 22.16(5)(d)):

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

Templates

Nitrate Notice--Template NC-1

Fecal Coliform or *E. coli* Notice--Template NC-2

Unresolved Total Coliform Notice--Template NC-3

Monitoring Violation Notice--Template NC-4

Instructions for Nitrate Notice--Template NC-1

Template on Following Page

Since exceeding the nitrate maximum contaminant level is a Tier 1 violation, you must provide public notice to persons served as soon as practical but within 24 hours after you learn of the violation (310 CMR 22.16(2)(b)). During this time period, you must also contact your regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program. **This template is also applicable to nitrite and total nitrate and nitrite violations.** It can also be used by non-community systems allowed by their regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program to exceed the limit without incurring a violation but still required to post. You must use one or more of the following methods to deliver the notice to consumers (310 CMR 22.16(2)(c)):

- Posting in conspicuous locations
- Hand or direct delivery
- Radio
- Television

You may need to use additional methods (e.g., newspaper, delivery of multiple copies to hospitals or clinics), since notice must be provided in a manner reasonably calculated to reach all persons served.

The language to encourage distribution of the notice is included on this notice; however, if you post this notice, omit the mandatory language to encourage distribution, as it is not needed since posting makes the notice available to everyone who passes by. If you modify the notice, you must leave the health effects language in italics unchanged. This language is mandatory (310 CMR 22.16(5)(d)). See Template 1-1 for a more detailed notice.

Alternative Sources of Water

If you are selling or providing bottled water, your notice should say where it can be obtained. Remember that bottled water can also be contaminated. If you are providing bottled water, make sure it meets the standard for nitrates by contacting the bottler and asking for the most recent test results.

Repeat Notices

If this is a repeat notice, or if your system's nitrate levels fluctuate around the MCL, you may wish to include an explanation similar to the following:

As you may recall, on [date], you were also notified of high nitrate levels that occurred during the ____ quarter of the year. Since that time the water system has been monitoring the nitrate concentration every three months. Seasonal fluctuations in nitrate concentrations have been observed, due to nitrates contained in fertilizer. It appears the high nitrates occur during the later summer and fall. Note that previous tests prior to [year] show that we were meeting drinking water standards for nitrate.

Corrective Action

In your notice, describe corrective actions you are taking. Listed below are some steps commonly taken by water systems with nitrate/nitrite violations. Use the following language, if appropriate:

- We are investigating water treatment and other options. These may include drilling a new well or mixing the water with low-nitrate water from another source.

After Issuing the Notice

Make sure to send your regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program and local Board of Health a copy of each type of notice and a certification that you have met all the public notification requirements within ten days after issuing the notice (310 CMR 22.15(3)(b)).

It is a good idea to inform your consumers when the violation has been resolved, especially if you have regular customers. See Template 1-6 for a "problem corrected" notice template.



DRINKING WATER WARNING



FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS 6 MONTHS AND YOUNGER

DO NOT USE THE WATER FOR INFANT FORMULA

High nitrate levels were detected on [date]

Bottled water should be used. [We are providing bottled water for infants and their families at ____].

Adults and children older than 6 months can drink the water

A routine sample on [date] showed a nitrate concentration in the drinking water of [level and units]. This is above the nitrate standard, or maximum contaminant level, of 10 mg/L.

Possible Health Effects

Infants below the age of six months who drink water containing nitrate in excess of the maximum contaminant level could become seriously ill and, if untreated, may die. Symptoms include shortness of breath and blue baby syndrome. Blue baby syndrome is indicated by blueness of the skin. Nitrate is a concern for infants because they can't process nitrates in the same way adults can.

Symptoms in infants can develop rapidly, with health deteriorating over a period of days. If symptoms occur in a child less than 6 months old, seek medical attention immediately.

If you are pregnant or have specific health concerns, you may wish to consult your doctor.

Steps We Are Taking

[Describe corrective action.]

We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated time frame]. We will inform you when this problem has been corrected. For more information, please contact [name of contact] of [system] at [phone number] or [location/address].

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

PWS ID#: _____

Date distributed: _____

Instructions for Fecal Coliform or *E. coli* Notice--Template NC-2

Template on Following Page

This template is intended for systems where consumers will not be able to boil water. See the instructions below on how to modify this template for other situations. Since exceeding the fecal coliform or *E. coli* maximum contaminant level is a Tier 1 violation, you must provide public notice to persons served as soon as practical but within 24 hours after you learn of the violation (310 CMR 22.16 (2)(b)). During this time period you must also contact your regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program. You must use one or more of the following methods to deliver the notice to consumers (310 CMR 22.16(2)(c)):

- Posting in conspicuous locations
- Hand or direct delivery
- Radio
- Television

You may need to use additional methods (e.g., newspaper, delivery of multiple copies to hospitals or clinics), since notice must be provided in a manner reasonably calculated to reach all persons served.

The language to encourage distribution of the notice is included on this notice; however, if you post this notice, omit the mandatory language to encourage distribution, as it is not needed since posting makes the notice available to everyone who passes by. If you modify the notice, you must leave the health effects language in italics unchanged. This language is mandatory (310 CMR 22.16(5)(d)). See Template 1-2 for a more detailed template appropriate for hand delivery (but with different instructions to consumers).

Instructions to Consumers

You may need to modify the instruction based on your system type. For instance, at a campground, you might tell consumers to boil the water before drinking or using for food preparation. Instructions also should depend on whether your system has elevated nitrate levels.

Alternative Sources of Water

If you are selling or providing bottled water, your notice should say where it can be obtained. Remember that bottled water can also be contaminated. If you are providing bottled water, make sure it meets the standard for bacteria and other contaminants by contacting the bottler and asking for the most recent test results.

Corrective Action

In your notice, describe corrective actions you are taking. Listed below are some steps commonly taken by water systems with fecal coliform violations. Use one or more of the following actions, if appropriate:

- We are chlorinating and flushing the water system.
- We are increasing sampling for coliform bacteria.
- We are repairing the wellhead seal.
- We are repairing the storage tank.

After Issuing the Notice

Make sure to send your regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program and local Board of Health a copy of each type of notice and a certification that you have met all the public notification requirements within ten days after issuing the notice (310 CMR 22.15(3)(b)).

It is a good idea to inform your consumers when the violation has been resolved, especially if you have regular customers. See Template 1-6 for a "problem corrected" notice template.



WARNING

DO NOT DRINK THE WATER



Fecal coliform [or *E. coli*] bacteria were found in the water supply on
[date]

Bottled water is available from _____]

Possible Health Effects

Fecal coliforms and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, some of the elderly, and people with severely compromised immune systems.

People at increased risk should seek advice about drinking water in general from their health care providers.

Steps We Are Taking

[Describe corrective action.]

We will inform you when additional samples show no coliform bacteria and you may drink the water. We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated time frame]. For more information, please contact [name of contact] of [system] at [phone number] or [location/address].

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

PWS ID#: _____

Date distributed: _____

Instructions for Unresolved Total Coliform Notice--Template NC-3

Template on Following Page

This template is intended for systems where consumers will not need to boil their water or where they will not have the facilities to do so. Since exceeding the total coliform bacteria maximum contaminant level is a Tier 2 violation, you must provide public notice to persons served as soon as practical but within 30 days after you learn of the violation (310 CMR 22.16(3)(b)). **Persistent total coliform problems can pose a serious health risk, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Drinking Water Program may elevate such situations to Tier 1. Check with your DEP regional office to make sure you meet all its requirements.** You must issue a repeat notice every three months for as long as the violation persists. Alternative language for systems required to take more than 40 samples a month is provided below.

Non-community systems must use one of the following methods (310 CMR 22.16 (3)(c)):

- Posting in conspicuous locations
- Hand delivery
- Mail

You must also use *another* method reasonably calculated to reach others if they would not be reached by the first method (310 CMR 22.16(3)(c)). In addition to the methods above, such methods could include newspapers, e-mail, or delivery to community organizations.

The language to encourage distribution of the notice is included on this notice; however, if you post this notice, omit the mandatory language to encourage distribution, as it is not needed since posting makes the notice available to everyone who passes by. If you modify the notice, you must leave the health effects language in italics unchanged. This language is mandatory (310 CMR 22.16(5)(d)).

Description of the Violation

The template on the following page is intended for use by systems taking fewer than 40 samples a month. Use the following language if you are required to take 40 or more samples per month:

- We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. During [month], ____ percent of our samples showed the presence of total coliform bacteria. The standard is that no more than 5 percent of samples may do so.

Corrective Action

In your notice, describe corrective actions you are taking. If you know what is causing the coliform problem, explain this in the notice. Listed below are some steps commonly taken by water systems with total coliform violations. Use one or more of the following actions, if appropriate, or develop your own:

- We are chlorinating and flushing the water system.
- We are increasing sampling for coliform bacteria.
- We are repairing the wellhead seal.
- We are repairing the storage tank.
- We will inform you when additional samples show no coliform bacteria.

Make sure to send a copy of each type of notice and a certification that you have met all the public notice requirements to your regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program and local Board of Health within ten days after issuing the notice (310 CMR 22.15(3)(b)).

It is a good idea to inform your consumers when the violation has been resolved, especially if you have regular customers. See Template 1-6 for a "problem corrected" notice template.

DRINKING WATER NOTICE

Tests show presence of coliform bacteria in water

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. We took [number] samples during [month]. [Number] of those samples showed the presence of total coliform bacteria. The standard is that no more than one sample per month may do so.

What This Means

This is not an emergency. Total coliform bacteria are generally not harmful themselves.

Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially-harmful, bacteria may be present. Coliforms were found in more samples than allowed and this was a warning of potential problems. Usually, coliforms are a sign that there could be a problem with the system's treatment or distribution systems.

You may drink the water. However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.

People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers.

Steps We Are Taking

[Describe corrective action.]

We will inform you when additional samples show no coliform bacteria. We anticipate resolving the problem within [estimated time frame]. For more information, please contact [name of contact] of [system] at [phone number] or [location/address].

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

PWS ID#: _____

Date distributed: _____

Instructions for Monitoring Violation Notice--Template NC-4

Template on Following Page

Since most monitoring violations are included in Tier 3, you must provide public notice to persons served within one year after you learn of the violation (310 CMR 22.16(4)(b)). Multiple monitoring violations can be serious, and your primacy agency may have more stringent requirements. Check with your DEP regional office to make sure you meet its requirements.

Non-community systems must use one of the following methods (310 CMR 22.16(4)(c)):

- Posting in conspicuous locations
- Hand delivery
- Mail

In addition, you must use *another* method reasonably calculated to reach others if they would not be reached by the first method (310 CMR 22.16(4)(c)). Such methods could include newsletters, e-mail, or delivery to community organizations. The language to encourage distribution of the notice is included on this notice; however, if you post this notice, omit the mandatory language to encourage distribution, as it is not needed since posting makes the notice available to everyone who passes by.

You must post the notice until the violation is resolved. If the violation has been resolved, you must post the notice for at least one week (310 CMR 22.16(4)(b)). If you mail, post, or hand deliver, print your notice on letterhead, if available.

The notice on the following page is appropriate for an annual notice combining notification for several violations, as well as for notices for individual violations. This example presents violations in a table; however, you may write out an explanation for each violation if you wish.

You may need to modify the notice if you had any monitoring violations for which monitoring later showed a maximum contaminant level or other violation. In such cases, you should refer to the public notice you issued at that time.

Include in your notice the standard language for monitoring and testing procedure violations in *italics* (310 CMR 22.16 (5)(d)(1)). If you modify the notice, you may not alter this mandatory language.

Corrective Actions

In your notice describe corrective actions you took or are taking. Listed below are some steps commonly taken by water systems with monitoring violations. Choose the appropriate language, or develop your own:

- We have since taken the required samples, as described in the last column of the table above. The samples showed we are meeting drinking water standards.
- We have since taken the required samples, as described in the last column of the table above. The sample for [contaminant] exceeded the limit. [Describe corrective action; use information from public notice prepared for violating the limit.]
- We plan to take the required samples soon, as described in the last column of the table above.

After Issuing the Notice

Make sure to send your regional office of the DEP Drinking Water Program and local Board of Health a copy of each type of notice and a certification that you have met all the public notice requirements within ten days after issuing the notice (310 CMR 22.15(3)(b)).

DRINKING WATER NOTICE

Monitoring requirements not met for [system]

We violated a drinking water standard. Even though this was not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened and what we are doing to correct this situation.

We are required to monitor your drinking water for specific contaminants on a regular basis. Results of regular monitoring are an indicator of whether or not our drinking water meets health standards. During [compliance period] we ['did not monitor' or 'did not complete all monitoring'] for [contaminant(s)] and therefore cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during that time.

What This Means

There is nothing you need to do at this time. The table below lists the contaminant(s) we did not properly test for, how often we are supposed to sample for [it/them] and how many samples we are supposed to take, how many samples we took, when samples should have been taken, and the date on which follow-up samples were (or will be) taken.

Contaminant	Required sampling frequency	Number of samples taken	When all samples should have been taken	When samples were or will be taken
Coliform (example)	twice per month	1	July 1, July 15, August 1	July 1, August 1

Steps We Are Taking

[Describe corrective action.] For more information, please contact [name of contact] of [system] at [phone number] or [location/address].

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

PWS ID#: _____

Date distributed: _____